

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
IN OPPOSITION TO
LD 888**

**“An Act To Recognize and Provide for the Right To Hunt for
Sustenance in Aroostook County for Maliseet and Micmac Tribal
Members and Disabled Veterans”**

Presented by: Representative BEAR of the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians.

Cosponsored by: Senator WILLETTE of Aroostook
Representatives: DANA of the Passamaquoddy Tribe
MITCHELL of the Penobscot Nation.

DATE OF HEARING: April 14, 2015

Good afternoon Senator Davis, Representative Shaw and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Judy Camuso, Wildlife Division Director at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking on behalf of the Department, in opposition to **L.D. 888**.

This bill provides that members of the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians and the Aroostook Band of Micmacs may hunt for any wild animal or bird at any time in Aroostook County for sustenance use. Tribal members engaging in this sustenance hunting are largely exempt from general wild game laws, except that moose and bear hunting must be done by special permits issued by the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. The Commissioner is required to annually issue 33 moose permits and 33 bear permits to members of each respective tribe. The commissioner is also directed to annually issue 33 moose permits and 33 bear permits for sustenance hunting in Aroostook County to 100% disabled United States veterans residing in Aroostook County, who are bound by the general wild game laws except that they may hunt from a motor vehicle.

Maine’s Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife goes to great lengths to develop short and long term management plans for Maine’s wildlife species. Current rules and regulations are painstakingly developed using biological, social, economic and other information; and importantly, the public is afforded ample opportunity for input into the development of these rules. Unregulated, unlimited exploitation of these resources would be detrimental to Maine’s fish and wildlife resources and Maine’s economy. Permitting this type of hunting activity will be in direct conflict with the Department’s mission to protect, conserve and enhance Maine’s fish and wildlife resources. Additionally, this activity would be in direct conflict with federal rules and laws with regard to some species; migratory waterfowl would be one example.

The Department does not currently limit bear permits and could certainly issue the requested permits however, they would be constrained by the State's season framework and bag limits. Similarly the Department could issue the requested moose permits out of our annual moose permit allotment but again they would be subject to the regular seasons and bag limits. With regards to moose permits, when at least 33 moose permits are issued within WMDs in Aroostook County these could be redirected to Maliseet and Micmac Tribal members and disabled veterans. However, this will reduce the number of permits available for current applicants. Any dedicated allocation of permits should be subject to availability based on sound biological principles, as provided for in the current moose management system. We would point out that disabled veterans are currently receiving moose permits through the controlled moose hunt (25 permits at this time).

We would ask that the permittees be required to comply with all laws and rules that apply for other moose permit holders.

I would be glad to answer any questions at this time or during the work session.